

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 1795

S E C R E T MANAMA 0070

E X D I S

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MARR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDEASTFOR RENT

REF : A. STATE 009357

B. MANAMA 0041

SUMMARY: GOB WILL CONSIDER OUR OFFER TO GRADUATE RENT TO \$4 MILLION UNDER SOME MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE FORMULATION. FOREIGN MINISTER GAVE NO PROMISE, HOWEVER, THAT ANYTHING LESS THAN FLAT \$4 MILLION PER YEAR ACCEPTABLE.

1. ADMIRAL HANKS AND I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER AND SHIRAWI EVENING JANUARY 18. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS STATE 9357 I MADE APPROACH ALONG LINES PARAS 5 THROUGH 7 MANAMA 41. STRESSED WE WERE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO ACCEPT IN PRINCIPLE GOB POSITION \$4 MILLION WAS REASONABLE RENT FROM STANDPOINT GOB'S POLITICAL PROBLEMS BUT THAT ABRUPT JUMP IN RENT GAVE US "POLITICAL PROBLEM" IN TERMS BUDGETARY PRESENTATION. COULD GOB NOT ASSIST US IN DEVISING FORMULA MEETING NEEDS BOTH GOVERNMENTS? MENTIONED FORMULATION PARA 6 MANAMA REFTEL AS AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE, NOT AS U.S. PROPOSAL OR POSITION.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER TOOK SEVERAL CRITICAL TACKS IN RESPONSE WHICH ADMIRAL HANKS AND I SOUGHT TO REBUT. GOB NEEDED \$4 MILLION AS GESTURE OF HELP FROM USG; WE EXPLAINED THAT WAS ENTIRE INTENT OUR APPROACH BUT SINCE FOREIGN MINISTER INSISTS "THE MONEY ITSELF IS NOT IMPORTANT" WE HOPE FOR GOB'S
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HELP IN RETURN IN WORKING OUT FORMULATION. FOREIGN MINISTER

EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT GRADUATED RENT INCREASE WOULD OPEN NAVY PRESENCE TO PERIODIC U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE WHILE GOB DESPERATELY WANTED TO WRAP UP MATTER QUIETLY, QUICKLY AND FOR GOOD. WE EXPLAINED BASIC PURPOSE OF OUR APPROACH WAS TO SEEK TO AVOID U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE BY REDUCING ABRUPTNESS OF RENTAL INCREASE. FOREIGN MINISTER THEN WANDERED OFF ON FAMILIAR THEME OF PROBLEMS NAVY PRESENCE CAUSES BAHRAIN IN ARAB WORLD AND HOW PRESENT "U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION" FLAP COMPOUNDS THIS PROBLEM. HE AND SHIRAWI THEN DRIFTED INTO GLOOMY ASSESSMENT MIDDLE EAST SITUATION WITH ADMINRAL HANKS AND I TRYING WITH ONLY LIMITED SUCCESS TO DISPEL SOME OF THE GLOOM.

3. AFTER SOME FURTHER SPARRING IN WHICH I SUGGESTED ILLUSTRATIVE VARIATIONS ON THE FORMULATION AND STRESSED WE WERE SEEKING GOB'S HELP IN WORKING OUT A FORMULA, I ASKED FOREIGN MINISTER IF OUR PROPOSAL ACCEPTABLE. HE SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO TAKE IT UP WITH "GOVERNMENT", THAT GOB WOULD OF COURSE GIVE IT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BUT THAT HE COULD GIVE US NO ASSURANCE GOB PREPARED TO ACCEPT ANYTHING LESS THAN FLAT \$4 MILLION PER YEAR STARTING FY-75. I NOTED WE WANT, AS DOES GOB, TO WRAP THIS MATTER UP QUICKLY. FOREIGN MINISTER AGREED BUT SAID (GOOD HUMOREDLY) "SINCE THE USG HAS KEPT US WAITING FOR TWO MONTHS SURELY YOU CAN GIVE US TWO OR THREE DAYS TO CONSIDER OUR RESPONSE."

4. COMMENT: I HAD DISTINCT IMPRESSION FOREIGN MINISTER AND SHIRAWI WERE UNDER TIGHT INSTRUCTIONS TO REJECT ANY OFFER BELOW \$4 MILLION, WERE BRACED TO DO SO, AND WERE CAUGHT QUITE OFF BALANCE BY OUR PROPOSAL. I BELIEVE THEY RECOGNIZE IT AS ATTEMPT TO BE RESPONSIVE TO GOB'S PROBLEMS BUT I HAVE NO SOLID BASIS FOR HOPE GOB WILL ACCEPT ANYTHING LESS THAN \$4 MILLION RENT STARTING THIS FISCAL YEAR.

5. DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS SECDEF, CNO, CINCEUR, CINCUSNAVEUR, AND COMIDEASTFOR.
TWINAM

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT/NOT PASSED MILITARY ADDRESSEES.
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